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Contact: Robin Winchell (202) 225-4031

WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon announced today the \$40 million disaster relief assistance for sugarcane producers and processors in Louisiana has survived the conference between the House and Senate on the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill (HR 4939). The conference agreement is expected to pass votes in the full House and Senate within the next couple of days.

"Farmers and fishermen in South Louisiana were especially hard-hit by last year's hurricanes and the relief funding in this bill may save many of them from financial ruin," said Melancon.

"I will continue to work with Sen. Landrieu and the rest of the Louisiana delegation to get the federal assistance we need to recover and rebuild."

Jessie Breaux, Vice-President of the American Sugar Cane League (ASCL) and a farmer from Franklin, LA, stated: "Congressman Charlie Melancon has worked hard to help all of the citizens of his district to get back on their feet and has been a true champion for our cane farmers throughout this ordeal. Thank you, Charlie, for putting your energies to work on our behalf."

The bill provides a total of \$500 million for agriculture and \$118 million for fisheries disaster relief assistance in the six states devastated by last year's hurricanes. Hurricane affected parishes in Louisiana will receive a share of the following earmarks as well:

- Livestock Compensation Program. The bill provides livestock owners in hurricane-affected counties and parishes a total of \$95 million for feed costs.
- Livestock Indemnity Program. \$30 million to help owners who lost livestock in the storms recover. Poultry and egg producers are also allowed to receive assistance under this program.
- Specialty Crops and Nursery Crops. \$95 million to provide assistance to specialty crops and nursery crops in hurricane affected counties and parishes. Assistance will especially benefit citrus farmers in Louisiana, who experienced catastrophic crop loss from the storm surge and subsequent floods. For many, the soil is too brackish to support new crops for years

to come.

- Oyster Bed and Shrimp Ground Reseeding. \$128 million for oyster bed and shrimp ground reseeded, rehabilitation and restoration, and cooperative research to monitor the recovery of Gulf fisheries.
- Surveying and Mapping for Marine Debris Removal. \$20 million to survey and map marine debris in preparation for removal. Debris will then be removed from the fishing grounds in the Gulf for the safety of fishermen. Hazardous items such as submerged shipwrecks and structures washed away with the storms, including docks, piers, and household items, pose a threat to fishermen and their boats and fishing gear.
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program. \$50.995 million to fund debris removal and stream channel clearing. The Natural Resources Conservation Service estimates over 1.5 billion pounds of debris needs to be removed and 2,500 miles of stream channels to be cleared as a result of the 2005 hurricanes.
- Community Facilities Grants and Loans. \$25 million in funding will be available to local governments in hurricane affected counties and parishes to construct or rehabilitate community facilities such as hospitals; police and fire stations; rescue and fire vehicles; courthouses; and schools.

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